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CONTACT: Senator Jim Barcia 517-373-1777 Senator Mike Prusi 517-373-7840

Barcia, Prusi Applaud Action To Aid State's Sugar Beet Industry

(LANSING) – Senators Jim Barcia (D-Bay City) and Mike Prusi (D-Ishpeming) applauded the action of the Senate Appropriations Committee today in approving legislation that will help Michigan's Sugar Beet Industry expand. Senate Bill 1349, which was sponsored by Senator Barcia, will extend a \$5 million loan to the state's sugar beet growers.

"The sugar industry in Michigan is a critical component of the state's economy," said Barcia. "We must do all that we can to ensure the industry remains competitive and extending this loan is an important step to achieving that goal."

The original loan, which was made by the state in 2001, enabled the state's sugar growers to form a cooperative and purchase Michigan Sugar from a Texas-based company one year later. With the changes included in the bill passed by the Appropriations Committee today, the growers will be able to complete the purchase of Monitor Sugar from a South African company and merge into a single cooperative. The sale is scheduled to be completed by the end of this month.

"Helping Michigan growers gain ownership of these two companies will help ensure their financial stability well into the future," said Prusi. "This small loan has helped a large industry take giant strides forward."

The Sugar Beet industry contributes more than \$500 million annually to the state's economy and employs more than 5,000 workers.

Senate Bill 1349 now goes to the full Senate for consideration.

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